



Testimony
Elizabeth Gara
Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA)
Before the Energy Committee
February 17, 2009
RE: HB-5694, Act Concerning Utility Service Termination

The Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA) *opposes* Section 1 of HB-5694, which would create unnecessary delays in responding to requests for termination of utility service by requiring utilities to establish that the person authorizing the termination is the customer of record.

Our companies already take a number of steps to verify that they are working with the customer of record and verifying account information when handling any request pertaining to a customer account. We do not believe that the current practices utilized by water utilities regarding termination of service warrant any change. Utilities and customers both benefit when utilities respond quickly and efficiently to requests for termination of service. The customers of our member companies have not expressed any concerns regarding how requests for termination of service are processed.

To the contrary, customers benefit from the ability of water companies to respond quickly and efficiently to requests for termination of service. For example, customer may have contractors or family members contact the utility to shut off service to make needed repairs, often times of an emergency nature. Attorneys, real estate agents and brokers may request termination of service to accommodate property transfers and closings. Family members may request termination of service when a loved one is hospitalized or has moved. The ability to respond to these requests would be compromised under the bill because the utility would be required to send a notice to the customer of record nine or more days prior to the requested termination date. This creates an unnecessary delay in responding to the needs of our customers and an additional administrative requirement on the utility.

In addition, water companies do not usually issue customer identification numbers prior to establishing service. Putting such a process in place will create unnecessary delays in responding to requests for new service, which would frustrate customers. Again, our members companies have not experienced any customer complaints regarding the absence of a customer identification number or password. We therefore oppose Section 1 as unnecessary and inefficient.

CWWA supports Section 2 of HB-5694, which provides that the owner, agent, lessor or manager of a residential dwelling is liable for service if the utility is denied access to its individual meters or other facilities. Utilities must be able to obtain access to meters for the purpose of inspection, testing, removal and exchange. Unfortunately, it is sometimes difficult to access meters for a variety of reasons. This section will help ensure that owners, etc. will take reasonable steps to ensure access to individual meters.

The Connecticut Water Works Association, Inc. (CWWA) is an association of private, municipal and regional public water supply utilities serving more than 500,000 customers, or population of about 2½ million people, located throughout Connecticut.